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SCIENCE

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THE GOVERNMENT OF AMERICAN
UNIVERSITIES

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THERE are perhaps some advantages in discussing the question of university government during the summer vacation, when partial detachment from professional duties makes possible a clearer perspective than when one is in the thick of the work. The problem is both difficult and urgent, and in approaching it one can not do better than remind oneself of the need of patience and good feeling in its consideration. Above all, it should be emphasized, as has already been done by Professor Jastrow in a recent number of SCIENCE, that the attack is not directed against individuals, but against a system. That system may be described as one of personal government, as opposed to government by consent or the self-government of a freely acting community. The objections against this system are directed not merely against the exercise of irresponsible power by college presidents, but against all claims on the part of any member of the university body to subject another to his personal will.

The urgent character of the problem, and the consequent significance attaching to the present agitation for reform in university government, is due to the fact that the very idea of a university as the home of independent scholars has been obscured by the present system. If it were true that only a few supersensitive individuals among university teachers were affected in their personal feeling by the power now exercised by presidents and other university administrative officers, the question would have little significance. But

it seems clear that there exists a large class of university teachers to whom it is every year becoming clearer that they have neither part nor lot in the larger interests of the institution to which they are attached. The effect of this condition is different in the case of different individuals. Some pessimistically give their assent to the theory that a university teacher is simply an employee of the trustees, who is paid a fixed salary for teaching certain classes. Others, having a truer sense of the importance and dignity of their profession, yet recognizing that the logic of actual events confirms the theory which they deny, grow restive and generally find the cause of their discontent in the tyranny of some individual whom they believe to be depriving them of their just rights. In both cases alike the result is unfortunate, and one that loudly calls for remedy. A man who regards himself as merely an employee is not likely to give to the university more than his theory demands, while a man who lives with a constant sense of grievance, knowing that there is no court before which he can claim redress, can not reasonably be expected to be greatly in love with his profession.

It is clear that the problem can not be solved by giving to each individual exactly the same weight in the government of the university. Organization and efficiency demand that some individuals shall have more responsibility and some less. But it is essential that each university teacher shall be conscious that he is a member of a community with which his own interests are organically bound up. This is only possible when the individual is made to feel that he is governed by principles to which his own reason consents. It seems unnecessary to argue that where this feeling is absent some change is imperatively demanded. As Mr. Balfour is reported

to have said in a recent speech in parliament: "Whenever you get to the point that a class feels itself excluded, and outraged by being excluded, then those who believe that democracy, properly understood, is the only possible government for any nation at the stage of political evolution which we have reached, must consider whether it is not their business to try to see that the government which is by hypothesis not a government by consent, can be turned into government by consent." The truth seems to be that in the era of expansion through which we have been passing we have been concerned with problems of material and organization, and have had no time to develop that internal spirit of loyalty and community without which bricks and mortar, overflowing class rooms, and even learned teachers and investigators can not make a real university. In the universities as elsewhere, the era of expansion has been attended by a certain loss of the ancient freedom. The demand has been for men "who could do things," and the tendency has been to measure efficiency in terms of immediate and striking results. Now, however, there seems to have come a period of reflection, and we realize that the spirit of a university can only spring from a free soil, and flourish in an atmosphere of fraternity.

The working theory as to the division of authority between the faculty and trustees has been that to the former belongs jurisdiction over all educational matters, while the latter have the right of control over all questions involving expenditure of money. Now, this enunciation of the respective powers of the two bodies has proved the bulwark of our liberties, and has served to prevent the direct interference of the trustees with the work of teaching. The talk of applying "business methods" to the administration of the university is still

occasionally heard in certain quarters, but the right of the faculty to control the educational policies, is now generally conceded by the trustees of all the more important universities. And it would not be fair to forget the important work that the presidents have done to secure this result, in upholding the rights of the faculties against boards of trustees, and in preventing these bodies from meddling in educational matters.

Nevertheless, it seems evident that university faculties have not yet fully realized all that their responsibility for educational work implies. In the first place, it is clear that this power can only extend a little way, unless it includes a voice in determining how the funds of the university are to be applied. Educational questions, and questions regarding the proper expenditure of money, can not be dissociated, and, as a matter of fact, the apportionment of funds among the different colleges and departments of a university is not now controlled by the trustees, but is, largely at least, determined by the president. The same is true of appointments to membership in the faculty and of promotions. It can not be denied, I think, that control on the part of the faculty of educational interests involves and requires a voice in determining the character of its own membership and in electing its own officers, including its president. This is the right and privilege of every self-governing body, and it is only under these conditions that a faculty can develop that sense of unity and *esprit de corps* which is essential for the most effective discharge of its functions. At present, however, this power which is nominally in the hands of the trustees is usually exercised by the president. The truth, then, seems to be that at least two important matters, which are vitally connected with the educational work of the university, are

in many of the universities assumed by the president, and exercised by him without any official recognition of the faculty. In practise it is doubtless true that the president is influenced, both in his recommendations as to the expenditure of money, and in his nominations for positions in the faculty, by the opinions and advice of certain members of the faculty, particularly of deans and directors and heads of departments. But neither the faculty as a whole, nor any individual member, can claim an official right to be heard or to have a vote in such matters. The result is unquestionably unfortunate, for both the president and the faculty. On the one hand, as the president has assumed sole responsibility, and as there is no body before which he comes to explain the grounds for his decisions, he becomes the target for criticism, which, unfortunately, often fails to understand the real conditions of the case. He thus suffers the loss of that sympathy and support which rightly belong to him in the discharge of his difficult duties. This, as wise presidents know, is a great source of weakness. "Bare is the back," says the Gaelic proverb, "without brother behind it."

There is also another side to the matter which can not be ignored: a system that does not leave room for freedom affects injuriously the ruler as well as the ruled. The psychological effects of irresponsible power upon the mind and character of those who exercise it has always been a favorite theme in literature. I have no wish to dwell on this side of the subject, but it can not be forgotten that a rational and moral life is only possible where there is a reciprocal "give and take" process with one's fellows. The man who isolates himself, thinking that he has the source of authority within himself, pays the penalty, as necessarily and inevitably as if he had

cut himself off from the sustaining life of the physical atmosphere.

The unfortunate effect of the present system upon university teachers has been already referred to, yet this point is so important as to demand frank discussion from many sides. I hope that the question will be taken up by others, and that we may be able to look the present situation squarely in the face. It seems fair to ask whether the present system of government, whose boast is in its efficiency, has tended to dignify the professorial office by giving to the men who hold it the strength and stimulus that comes from a consciousness of membership in a community devoted to the highest ends. Is it likely to attract into the profession men of independent spirit and to call out the best that is in them? The actual state of affairs it seems to me, compels us to answer questions of this kind in the negative.

In spite of the fact that the office of university president has been filled during this generation with gentlemen who have as a class attempted to discharge its duties, not only with fairness and integrity, but in a spirit of patience and consideration for the rights of others, no one can doubt that the system has had its day, and that a change is at hand. It is an anachronism in this modern age, and an anomaly in a democratic country. The arbitrary power of the president has always been a subject of wonder to European scholars. Professor Alois Brandl, of the University of Berlin, gives the following picture of the American university president,¹ which is fairly typical of the impressions our visitors carry away regarding that office:

Er muss ein "starker Mann" sein, a strong man, der das Blühen und Wachsen der Anstalt in jeder Hinsicht betreibt. Verantwortlich ist er nur den Vertrauensmännern. Wird er bei diesen ver-

klagt, so müssen diese sagen können: "Was wollt ihr? Er ist ein starker Mann, wir bekommen keinen bessern, wir halten zu ihm." Hat er diese Rückendeckung, so ist er fast unbeschränkter Herr über den Lehrkörper und kann Absetzungen wie Anstellungen mit einer Freiheit vornehmen, wie sie bei uns kein Minister genießt, kein Monarch gebraucht. Durch solche Einrichtung von Diktatoren liebt es bekanntlich der Amerikaner, gegen die Ungebundenheit seiner Verfassung ein Gegengewicht zu schaffen, um eine wirksame Verwaltung zu ermöglichen. . . . Dagegen findet die Macht des Präsidenten ihre Grenze an der Bodenschicht der Universität, an den Studierenden. Gegen diese übt er in der Regel das freundlichste Entgegenkommen; denn eine starke Auswanderung der Hörer, selbst ein häufiges Durchfallen bei den Prüfungen würde auf das Gedeihen der Anstalt einen Schatten werfen und wird daher nach Kräften vermieden. Durch den Präsidenten hat der Studierende in Amerika eine Hand auf den Dozenten, wie bei uns durch das Kollegengeld: so greifen dort die innersten Räder ineinander. Der Kurator an einer preussischen Provinzuniversität, den man am ehesten mit dem "president" in Parallele stellen möchte, hat ein wesentlich verschiedenes Amt; er hat weniger zu sagen, aber auch weniger zu sorgen; er ist ungleich abhängiger nach oben und unabhängiger nach unten; er ist nur ein respektirter Vermittler und nicht ein autoritativer Führer.

I have said that the present relation between the university presidents and the faculties must undergo a change in the interests of both parties. I can not, however, think that it would be a step in the right direction for the faculties to appeal, as Professor Jastrow suggests, to the lay members of boards of trustees against the presidents. For, after all, it must not be forgotten that the presidents belong to the faculty side of the family. As President Butler has said: "The heads of the great universities were every one of them not long ago humble and poorly-compensated teachers."² If a breach exists between president and faculty, it should rather be closed than widened. In other words, what requires to be emphasized is, not the rights

¹ *Deutsche Rundschau*, April, 1907.

² *The American as He Is*, p. 38.

of the professors as over against those of the president, but the duties and responsibilities that belong to all in virtue of their membership in the common corporate life of the university. As has been frequently remarked, "liberty" and "equality" are one-sided and inadequate ideas until they are completed by the conception of "fraternity." And within this idea of fraternity the president, as well as all other members, should be included. He is not to be regarded as an *Ueberschensch*, standing in special relations to the Absolute, or, on the other hand, as lacking in the virtues and loyal feelings of his colleagues. He is a man and a brother on whom great responsibilities rest. But he has received no new baptism which should set him apart from his fellows. The burdens and responsibilities he carries are shared by his colleagues, who gladly yield to him the honorable position of *Primus inter pares*, because he is, to a greater extent than any other member of the faculty, the servant of all, and because they recognize also that in him is embodied and personified the corporate authority and dignity of the university more fully than in the person of any other member. When these relations are realized the strength of the president's position is greatly enhanced and dignified, because it is *inclusive* and represents the authority of a self-governing faculty. In universities, as in all social organizations, absolute power is the weakest form of authority, because it is exclusive and disintegrating. In denying the rights of others, it establishes a system of potential war, where there is no law but the will of the strongest. On the other hand, real authority only exists in so far as it is shared by others. Its impregnable rock of support is found in the fact that it expresses the will and consent of the governed.

These principles are, of course, very old,

but they never become trite. They seem to furnish the only practical solution of the problem of university government. For they make clear the hopeful line of advance. Faculties must rise to a realization of what is involved in their responsibility for educational affairs. "It devolves upon the faculties," says President Eliot in his book on "University Administration," ". . . to discern, recommend, and carry out the educational policies of the institution." Let us take our stand upon this, and proceed to act without stopping to debate constitutional questions. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*. By accepting their responsibilities, the faculties will regain their rightful authority. "The way to resume is to resume." It is not by any great external revolution in the form of university organization that the system is to be changed, but by gradual evolution from within through a movement from which we may hope that "freedom will slowly broaden down from precedent to precedent."

If objection be brought to this program on the ground that it is unpractical—an objection that is often mistaken for the voice of an oracle—I would reply that it is only necessary to lift up one's eyes to see that the program is already in course of fulfilment. The very fact that the subject is being discussed shows that a change has come: ten years ago the importance of the problem was realized by scarcely any one. Studies like that of Professor Marx, on "The Problem of the Assistant Professor" have emphasized the need of more freedom and democracy in the organization of faculties. President Hill of the University of Missouri, in reply to one of Professor Marx's questions, writes: "A more democratic organization of department faculties seems to me one of the most important and pressing reforms demanded in educational institutions." President Hill was thinking

only of democracy within a department; but it is obvious that there is a demand for a wider application of the principle. At Yale, and also at some of the smaller universities, the faculty has an official voice in determining the character of its own membership. At Cornell University the faculty of the college of arts and sciences have more than once in recent years made recommendations which were accepted by the trustees regarding the establishment of new chairs in that college. And during the last year the faculty of the graduate school at Cornell adopted an important series of resolutions which formulated, among other things, certain principles to be observed in making appointments to the faculty and in promotions, as well as in the apportionment of funds to the purposes of elementary and advanced teaching. There was no thought of raising any question as to the constitutional force of these resolutions; but I feel sure that I can say that they were adopted with the president's hearty concurrence and approval and are accepted by him as the voice of the faculty.

I mention these things because they seem to point in a significant and encouraging way to the happy solution of our problems. The growing sense of the duties and responsibilities that are laid upon members of faculties by their commission to "discern, recommend, and carry out the educational policies of the institution" will give rise to a new feeling of loyalty and *esprit de corps* that will lead to something better than a "class" feeling on the part of university teachers—a consciousness of the dignity and value of their own profession which will make them more useful members of society. No one can doubt that the university president who works quietly and patiently towards this result will have a far more enduring title to fame than if he had covered the campus with

marble buildings or had been the inventor of a much-heralded "elective" or "preceptorial" system.

That university presidents and other administrative officers have felt and will continue to feel the new drift of things there is no serious reason to doubt. It would not be fair to assume that they are unwilling to cooperate in a democratic movement as soon as faculties show a disposition to assume their proper responsibilities and rise to "the point of view of the whole." Indeed, the strength of the president's position has consisted in the fact that he has attempted to represent, however inadequately, the interests of the university as a whole, while members of faculties have often failed to see beyond their own departments. The objection, therefore, that a democratic movement can look for nothing but obstruction from administrative officers seems unduly pessimistic. There may indeed be such cases, but patience and good feeling will do much to dispose of them. And, after all, no man or set of men can long obstruct this movement. Stephenson's reply to the objection regarding the danger of the cow getting on the railway track seems to fit the case—"it wad be verra' bad for the coo."

No changes in external organization can compare in importance with the birth of the new spirit that I have ventured to predict, or be properly regarded as a substitute for it. Nevertheless, it seems likely that this new spirit will demand, as time goes on, new and more adequate forms for its expression. The multitude of distracting duties that the presidents of the larger universities are called upon to perform prevent them from keeping in touch as closely as is desirable with the educational work of the faculties. It is also unfortunate that university presidents are no longer teachers, and that no leisure is af-

forded them for productive work. An interesting suggestion in this connection has been made by Professor Cattell. In a letter to the New York *Evening Post*³ he proposed that there should be a division of the office by the appointment of both a president and a chancellor. The general idea underlying the proposal is that the president should be the leader of the faculty in educational affairs and that the chancellor should represent the university locally and before the world. It is to be hoped that questions of this nature will continue to be discussed freely and frankly both by university presidents and professors. The subject might perhaps be discussed profitably by the Association of American Universities. That body should, however, realize, as a preliminary to any discussion, that there can be no real association of American universities in which the faculties of the universities are not represented.

J. E. CREIGHTON

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REPORT OF THE PERMANENT COMMISSION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEISMOLOG-
ICAL ASSOCIATION

THE writer attended the conference held at Zermatt, Switzerland, August 30 to September 3, 1909, as the delegate for Canada. It was well attended. Of the twenty-three countries forming the association twenty were represented, as follows: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Roumania, Russia, Servia, Spain and Switzerland. Regret was expressed that the United States did not send a representative. Besides the delegates, other scientists were present, making the total in attendance 42.

Professor A. Schuster presided, and Dr. Hepites, of Bukarest, was elected vice-president for the remaining two years, when the general meeting will be held in July, 1911, at Manchester, England.

³ October 5, 1901.

Mention may be made of several reports of committees appointed at The Hague meeting in 1907. The one on bibliography recommended that arrangements be made with the International Catalogue of the Royal Society for the publication in one volume of all papers on seismology.

The committee on "Catalogue," *i. e.*, for the publication of the catalogue for the earthquakes of 1906, held several meetings before a compromise was effected between different views on the character of classification, regional or chronological. Considerable expense is involved in the preparation of a catalogue, hence its contents should serve scientific ends especially.

From the report two years ago to this association of The Hague meeting it will perhaps be recalled that makers of instruments had been invited to submit for competition a simple seismograph, with magnification forty to fifty and costing in the neighborhood of seventy-five dollars. The testing of the apparatus was to be done at the Central Bureau at Strassburg, and the award was entrusted to a committee of five members. Three instruments were submitted and subsequently tested. The committee on instruments found that the terms of competitions had not been rigorously adhered to; that the price set for an efficient instrument was too low and not in keeping with the precision required in seismological work of the present day; that however good work had been done by the manufacturers for the above seventy-five dollars; and that no prize be awarded, but instead the money, some \$250, be equally divided between the three manufacturers, in a measure as compensation for their efforts. Emphasis was laid in the report on the fact that the first consideration of a scientific instrument is efficiency; the cost being a secondary consideration.

Nearly every country represented presented a report on its respective seismological service.

Of the numerous papers presented there were several of particular interest. Professor Hecker presented the results of his ob-